

The Christian Church essentially Missionary

ANNUAL SERMON

BEFORE THE

American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions

DELIVERED TUESDAY EVENING

OCTOBER 15, 1889

BY THE

REV. LEWELLYN PRATT, D.D.

BOSTON

THOMAS TODD, PRINTER, CONGREGATIONAL HOUSE
CORNER BEACON AND SOMERSET STREETS

1889

SERMON.

“JESUS THEREFORE SAID TO THEM AGAIN, PEACE BE UNTO YOU: AS THE FATHER HATH SENT ME, EVEN SO SEND I YOU. AND WHEN HE HAD SAID THIS, HE BREATHED ON THEM, AND SAITH UNTO THEM, RECEIVE YE THE HOLY SPIRIT: WHOSE SOEVER SINS YE FORGIVE, THEY ARE FORGIVEN UNTO THEM; WHOSE SOEVER SINS YE RETAIN, THEY ARE RETAINED.” — *John xx: 21-23.*

Brethren and Fathers: These words take us back to the beginnings of the Christian Church. They define its mission, confirm its authority, and reveal its world-wide power.

If there be any special occasion when the Christian Church may appropriate the high-priestly prayer of Jesus Christ just before he yielded up his life, and come under the baptism of his first meeting with the disciples after his resurrection, when he formally and for all time commissioned them — it is in such services as this which calls us together tonight. We are gathered from our distributed tasks to counsel for the work of the Church in the world, to study the plan of the Leader, and to learn the nature of the commission from the Head of the movement, from the King who sends the embassy of which we are a part.

Going back, then, to that prayer of consecration, in which Jesus surveys the extent of the work intrusted to him, we hear him praying for new means of action upon the world. Having finished the part to be accomplished by his visible presence, he asks for himself restoration to the complete exercise of divine powers, of which he had for the time divested himself. Not simply for restoration to divine blessedness and glory does he ask — for the aim of that petition is not his own satisfaction — but the continuation and finishing of his work — “that thy Son may glorify Thee,” and “that the world may believe that Thou didst send me.”

Assuming, now, what he had up to this time forbidden the disciples to use, the title of “the Christ,” that they may have his sanction for its use, since he is in “a little while” to commit his

work on earth to them and to give them the new word of command for mankind, he prays by an appeal to the decree of the Father — “as Thou hast given Him power” — the decree by which sovereignty over the whole human race — “all flesh” — had been conferred upon him as Redeemer and Saviour. That sovereignty, he, “the Christ,” is now to use as the basis of the command to go and disciple all the nations — that is, to take possession of them in his name.

He prays, also, for the special band whom he had chosen and kept, and for all who should believe on him through them, that they may be sanctified and be brought into oneness with the Father and himself, in order that through them, whom he has not simply prepared to be taken out of the world, but who are to remain in the world, and whom he sends into the world as the Father had sent him — that through them the world may know God, the holy and righteous Father, and Jesus Christ, and, receiving that knowledge and believing it, may have eternal life. He concentrates his prayer on them, the missionaries of the truth to the whole world, on them “alone” for the world’s sake. He contemplates them as sent as truly as he was, and as so united into oneness with him that he is made the head of one long line of confessors and martyrs who labor and struggle for the sake of God’s glory. Hence they have been called out of the world and sanctified — set apart and made holy — lifted into a higher sphere of life and action and power, and thence can be sent on the same mission. As he was sent from heaven to touch and renew the life of man by the communication of the knowledge of the true God, so, having brought up into that knowledge and life chosen ones, he is about to send them, in whom that life is embodied, to be heralds and propagators of that knowledge in all the world.

Accordingly we find, on the evening of the resurrection, he appears to his disciples to prove that his prayer for himself was in a measure answered, to confirm their faith in him, reunite them to him, open their minds that they may understand the Scriptures concerning him, and to show that Christ must needs suffer and rise again, “that repentance and remission of sins be preached in his name unto all the nations.” The apprehension of the gospel was followed at once by the charge to proclaim it; the work of Christ, finished in one sense, was to be continued in another, and

fresh powers were divinely provided for fresh duties. The disciples, awakening from the joy of surprise, passed into the joy of calm assurance ; but, convinced as to the present and enlightened as to the past, the mighty future lay before them unknown and unexplained. "Jesus *therefore* said to them *again*, Peace be unto you." He had spoken to them the word of "peace" for themselves — peace in the certainty that death had been overcome, in restored fellowship with the lost Master, in the words which removed from them their burden of sin — "and the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord." Through his return they had been completely changed ; they had tasted the powers of the spiritual world.

But the shut doors remind them of a world hostile and powerful, and this world was to be met and conquered. The words, "Ye are my witnesses" "unto all the nations," showed them their mission ; they could not remain isolated and inactive. *Therefore*, in prospect of the vast undertaking which they had not yet attempted, using the strength of renewed personal faith, starting from the vantage-ground of quickened hope and reaching forth at once to the last issues of Christian effort, Jesus said to them *again*, "Peace be unto you !" Not merely as believers now, but as missionaries to the world, he brings from the grave this message of reconciliation and peace they will have the task of proclaiming to the world, that they may be able to say : "We are ambassadors therefore on behalf of Christ, as though God were entreating by us : we beseech you on behalf of Christ, be ye reconciled to God." He confers the vocation, then the gift of power in the measure now possible, then the greatness of the task. And we note that our Lord here is not speaking exclusively to his apostles ; there is here no special apostolic pitch of duty. These words were not addressed to all the apostles, nor to the ten alone. Others were with them ; the commission and the promise were given, like the Pentecostal blessing, to the body of disciples, and not to any special order in it. The work which is described deals with sin and its pardon, and is to manifest the divine will and not to determine it. To all Christians as such, to ministers and to people alike, and while they are as yet undistinguished from each other, he directs the words of sovereign power in the announcement of his victory over death and sin. The message of the gospel is the

glad tidings of sin conquered. To convey and apply *this* is the office of the Church, and so of each member of the Church.

In the very terms used he shows that he is the one apostle; the mission of the disciples is included in his, and is simply to realize that to the world. He claims this in the word used to express *his* sending, while in passing it on to them he uses a simpler word implying a sending under that. He is the apostle; they are his evangelists. And as there is properly but one mission, there is also but one force for fulfilling, that which he communicates through the Spirit. Raised himself to a higher stage, Jesus raises them by the Spirit to this new position, associates them in his state as raised from the dead — just as later at Pentecost he will make them participate through the Spirit in his state as glorified — communicates to them the spirit of adoption, and the spirit of wisdom in the understanding of the Scriptures, and the spirit of power in bringing their wills into unison with his, that they may be prepared for their new work — offering salvation to every human being in the name of Christ.

“Peace be unto you.”

“I send you *into the world* as the Father hath sent me.”

“Receive ye the Holy Spirit.”

“Whose soever sins ye forgive, they are forgiven.”

I. CHRIST'S MISSION, THE PATTERN.

Christ's mission to the world is our starting-point as we strive to find the motive lying back of the Christian Church. He himself makes this the pattern for his disciples, and declares the extent and character of the sympathy which must subsist between them and their pattern. The most absolute oneness of heart, will, and life is required of them. To believe in him implicitly; to receive his mind on all things as perfect wisdom, his will as absolute law; to be able to cry to him as he cried to the Father — “not my will, but thine, be done” — this is the spirit of Christian discipleship. It is not merely the fact of *a* mission, but the character of *the* mission which Christ dwells upon in likening the disciples to himself in their relation to the world. He assumes it to be possible that his followers enter into the spirit that inspired his coming, the spirit that Paul illustrates when he says to the Colossians: “I fill up on my part that which is lacking of the

afflictions of Christ in my flesh for His body's sake, which is the Church; . . . to fulfill the word of God, even the mystery which hath been hid from all ages and generations: but now hath it been manifested to his saints, to whom God was pleased to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory."

We do not forget that there is the great distinctive work of Jesus Christ, in which man has no partnership, which was done once for all and declared to be finished—that work by which he put away sin by the one great sacrifice which he alone made for its expiation. He is the author of salvation as well as the witness of salvation, the message as well as the messenger sent from heaven. In the one sense he is not sent, he is the absolute, underived origin and source; he is "the Lamb that hath been slain from the foundation of the world." In the other, he is the messenger of the covenant, the apostle of the gospel already provided, who comes "to declare the things hidden from the foundation of the world." God reveals himself in Christ by what Christ is and does rather than by what he says; but Christ proclaims himself, and his death making the sacrifice is a revelation and proclamation. Not as he makes the one atonement for sin, but as he brings that out of the counsels of eternity and makes it operative upon the world; not as the High Priest but as the Apostle of our confession, is he here set to be the pattern for the Church.

Take, for example, a few of the salient features of Christ's mission.

1. He was sent into the world to declare and apply the remedy for the disease of sin—a scientific remedy which made application of God's mind, by careful method, by infinite wisdom, to a disease which he alone could measure: "Christ crucified the wisdom of God and the power of God." He was sent to declare that One mighty to save had entered into the miserable conditions of humanity, put himself under God's law—One who knew no sin had taken upon himself the sin of the world and been made a curse for sinful man, that thus there might be, by that rational and beautiful law, vicarious sacrifice, the intervention of a stainless will and an untainted love, through which God might drive in his wedge and effect a separation between man and his heritage of sin; that there might be in the world "the irresistible might of a will unbroken and a love pure and strong moving with patience

toward the beauty of holiness, and with its unwavering eyes ever fixed on God," the source of life and health. He was sent to bring the remedy which he provided for sin—sin, the source of the poverty and the sicknesses and the distresses of the world—and not to work away at these natural results except as he wrought at the cause; and hence he was ever more anxious, when men came to him, to say, "Thy sins be forgiven thee," than to say, "Rise up and walk." He was sent not as a reformer, but as a Saviour.

2. He was sent to declare that this remedy was the supernatural, purposed act of the personal God, an act out of heaven, originative and antecedent. Not up from man, but down from God, must help come. The force of the whole story of Christ's coming founds itself upon the truth that God must begin the work of salvation; that the misery of sin is its powerlessness to begin the recovery; that man cannot beget himself. Just as the secret act of God's original energy underlies our natural life, preceding, hidden, enduring, so a secret act of forgiving, life-renewing love, original, preceding, enduring, must underlie all man's regenerated life. God spoke once, "Let us make man," and breathed into him the breath of life, and man became a living soul. God spoke again: "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me and I will give thee the nations for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession;" and in the power of that decree the new race of the saved finds itself existing. Not man's goodness moved the Father to send the Son, as he did, into the world, but man's sin. "While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." God first loved man, while he still loved sin rather than holiness, in order that by loving us He might restore the lost power of loving Him. Man could not begin until God had begun. To deny this is to be still under the law—the law of works and wages, which Paul declares unavailing. True help, Christ's sending shows, does not come along that road; not by development, but by regeneration.

3. Christ was sent to find a place for and to manifest the love of God in the world. How can holiness dwell with that which is corrupt? How can purity love the impure? The answer is, "God sent his Son into the world" to have part with man, to be identified with him. The act, then, by which God pardons, brings out of heaven the power to begin in the world the change that

justifies the forgiveness. God pardons by sending his Son into the world. He has ever been ready, has ever been crying to man through the former times, "Why will ye die?" but what is there in man on which his favor can rest? His forgiveness and love are shut up within Himself. There is no point of attachment by which to lay hold. "The love of God" has been pictured as "wandering round and round this sinful, inhospitable world, and finding no door that is not barred, and no hand that is stretched out to take it in. Therefore he sends his Son, in whom his pardon can find a road into this repellent world, into this repugnant humanity. God's expelled love, as all other doors are bolted, will open a way for itself; as no man will admit it, it will itself become man that it may find admittance." Jesus Christ is the forgiveness of God. He arrives, bringing with him into humanity the forgiving and cleansing love of the Father. There is now one spot, at least, on which the eyes of God's purity can rest. There is now, amidst the loveless herds of men, one heart on which he can pour out his love, one person who can admit the rushing power of the transfiguring Spirit. The love, purity, life of God, "long homeless and unhoused," have now found a footing within our flesh, a habitation, a temple. They had looked, and there had been no man, not one that would respond to their appeals, not one that would welcome their intimacy—no, not one. Now, there is one Son of man, in and through whom they could begin to work. Through him, a real man, the love of God, the life of God came into the race of which he became part. He was sent not only to do a work for us, but in us, and in such way that God is "holy" and "righteous" in the forgiveness of sin.

4. He was sent thus to bear witness to the truth that the salvation of the world, while *from* God, is *by* man. Therefore he became man—"the Word became flesh." This condition was necessary that he might identify himself with those in whose places he was to stand; for there must be both a revelation of God's claims upon humanity, and a recognition of those claims by that humanity itself. He must be a real man, who should live so as to bring human life in his own person up to the state appointed by God, and repair the evil brought in by sin, and become a redemptive and regenerating power in humanity. More than man he was, but he must become man and deal with actual human conduct in actual human conditions. But not only for

his distinctive personal work does he thus enter himself; he shows this to be God's plan for the world, to save man by man. From the first it had been so. It was the seed of the woman that was to bruise the serpent's head; primarily, Christ himself, but in Christ the redeemed human posterity. When he came, he submitted to the law, and took up the struggle as a struggle of the race. He illustrated this idea in various ways, notably in the parable of the leaven, where there is not only the working of the leaven originally put in, but of each particle that is leavened, till the whole is leavened. He, the Son of man, is the Son of God; but "to as many as received him gave he the right to become the children of God, even to them that believe on his name." He is the preacher of righteousness; but he makes men preachers of righteousness. He brings the gospel; but he deposits the gospel, with all its institutions and appointments, with men. He is baptized with the Spirit, but he baptizes men with the Spirit. He forgives sin, but he also tells men, "Whose soever sins ye forgive, they are forgiven." They declare the pardon he brought and wrought — "a savor of life unto life or of death unto death." He comes to convert the world, but he gives to men the work of evangelizing the world. Through his name, through his continual presence, through the work of the Spirit, but by human agency, as he shall use and inspire that agency alone, salvation is to be brought to the world. The great world — all the empires, continents, islands, many parts then undiscovered, all the generations and ages, are given in trust to men. He is the Captain of salvation, but he is to fight through his soldiers for the victory. Having chosen men to propagate his work, and made them one with himself through the Spirit, he makes them worthy to be called his own by giving them the task of overcoming the world. "Since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection from the dead." "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself" is the gospel Christ came to bring, and which he has given to men to preach. Through a human medium this revelation came; through human means it is to be made known.

II. THE CHURCH, THE MISSIONARY.

Thus we are brought to the Christian Church, the body in which the risen Christ continues to dwell on earth, and through which he continues and extends his mission to the world. While

here in the earth as a man our Lord submitted to the limitations of the flesh and dwelt in the locality and nation in which he was born. He spent his life in that little country so strangely separate from the great empires of men. On either side of him were the millions without God and without hope. His eyes looked out on the fields white for the harvest; his heart yearned for the other sheep not of this fold; he anticipated the coming of the many from the East and the West; he knew that it was to be his death and resurrection that should liberate his activity and make him Lord of all flesh, that he was straitened till that should be accomplished, and that then the new means of action for which he prayed would be secured when the repressed secret of his coming for the world would burst its limitations of locality and nation, and go forth to work out its will with power among the nations. Therefore, having finished the part given him to do, and that depended upon his localized stay on the earth; having brought down the life of God and found a lodgment for it in the race; having united some into oneness with himself and participation in his oneness with the Father, he could ascend to resume the exercise of his divine powers in their world-wide scope through them. Therefore he prayed, "Take me out of the world: keep them in the world." He could now send men to be his instruments, the Church to be his organ, by which his own presence could find channels of entry and be distributed everywhere. Thus he had secured citadels into which from heaven he could throw his spiritual forces, means by which his special saving power could discharge itself.

To men, then, chosen men, he commits himself and his mission. He says: "As the Father hath sent me"—not merely as the Father sent me—"so send I you." He thus declares that his work is not over, though the manner of it is changed. Henceforth he is and he acts in those whom he has chosen. They are in him, sharing in the fullness of his power; he is in them, sharing in the burden of their labors; and now it is their part to bear witness, that the world may believe. They are to take the same truths he came to bring from heaven—God's remedy for sin, the love of God to man, man's work for man, Christ the sacrifice and the Saviour; to bring from another realm that which earth could not furnish, to illumine, vivify, and guide. He intrusts to them the supernatural message, and they are to bear witness to the truth, and, like him, "to seek and to save that which was lost," "to call not the righteous, but sinners, to repentance." As he

constantly appealed to the Father — “I do nothing of myself ; as the Father hath taught me, I speak these things” — so they are to be able to say, “We are not as the many, corrupting the word of God ; . . . but as of God, in the sight of God, speak we in Christ.” He is the Light of the world ; to them, he says, “Ye are the light of the world.” He is the sole purifying sacrifice ; but they, organized in him, become his sacrifice, by which corruption is stayed, and he says, “Ye are the salt of the earth.” He says also of the diffusiveness of his work : “He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man, and the field is the world, and the good seed, these are the sons of the kingdom.” They are the light of the world, the salt of the earth, the good seed of the kingdom sown in the world-field.

Read over the farewell address of Christ, his last prayer, and then his great commission after his resurrection, and see if every word does not obtain meaning from this view of the mission of the Church to the world. He begins the parable of the vine and its branches, but interrupts the story by demanding “fruit,” and “much fruit,” of the branches, before he has told what the branches are, and breaks up the figure entirely by telling them to “go and bear fruit.” He anticipates sending them before he sends them, and says, “He that receiveth whomsoever I shall *send*, receiveth me.” He asks them to live so that “*all men* know that ye are my disciples.” He promises the Comforter, who shall witness and make them witnesses, going with them to “convict the *world* of sin and righteousness and judgment.” He promises that they shall do greater works, because he goes to the Father ; then tells them distinctly to “go into *all* the *world*,” and “be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.” Here is the meaning, the purpose of the Church, not to receive, but to give. It is sifted out, chosen, disciplined, purged, that, holding fast the name, the truth, the life of Christ, it may put that name, that truth, that life of Christ to its full use and exercise, to make possible, to make known, to make active, the work which Christ by his incarnation, death, and resurrection, achieved once for all. Only through man can it be laid open to man. What Christ was in the world, that the Church is ; “so is every one that is born of the Spirit.” To be born of the Spirit necessitates being what the Spirit is.

Whether, then, the Church shall be filled with the missionary spirit, or not, is not a question. The missionary enterprise is not

an aspect or phase of Christianity; it is Christianity itself. "Ye are my witnesses;" "Ye are the light of the world," "the salt of the earth," "the good seed" planted in the whole field.

As the agent of the Christ in the execution of the sublime purpose — supplying the spiritual need of the world — the Church is of necessity a missionary organization, endowed for this purpose, and authorized to carry the gospel to every creature. The Church now must not make the blunder of the eleven at the first, the blunder of omitting the change wrought by the resurrection, the blunder of knowing Jesus after the flesh and simply clinging to him as their special possession, of simply recording the old days when he was with them. It must grasp with them later, and with Paul, the mystery revealed in His resurrection and ascension, His lordship over the Gentiles, that which lay dormant and inoperative all the days of the flesh, whose issues, necessities, width and demands could become visible only when He had ascended up into heaven. The resurrection is no glorious end sealing a work done; it is itself the beginning, and not the end. The full work had not really begun until Jesus rose from the dead. The resurrection of Christ carries the Christian Church over a dividing line and plants it out amid the vital energies of the new dispensation. It leaves behind the exclusiveness of Judaism, it drops the distinction between Jew and Gentile — a distinction of race and blood — it deals not with man as a thing of earth, as of a particular seed, as he is through his birth in the flesh. It is dead to all these; there is now neither Jew nor Gentile, bond nor free. The world is the field of the Christian Church; the entire race is the object of its thought and labor. Into all the world it is sent, to subdue all the earth unto Christ, the Lord of the resurrection. And each particular church in its own measure is thus a missionary body — not merely a consecrated household — designed under the divine economy to have a specific mission to humanity; it is a messenger of glad tidings to every sinner, however far astray, whom it can by any means reach. Its command is: "Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor and maimed and blind and lame;" and then, that My house may be filled, "Go out into the highways and hedges and constrain them to come in." It belongs to the world for Christ's sake.

This is a cardinal obligation wrought into the very constitution

of the Christian Church at large, and of each particular organization of the Church of the resurrection; and any deviation from it, even in thought, is infidelity to the great commission given to his earthly body by the ascended Head. He bids us to go into the world bent on evangelizing all the nations. So shall we give effect to the cross of Christ and prove that Christ has not been sent in vain; so shall we uphold the honor of Christ's name; so shall his joy remain in us and our joy be fulfilled; so shall we be his disciples.

III. THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST THE POWER OF THE CHURCH FOR ITS MISSION.

A right relation having been restored between God and man, and men united to him through Christ, the impartation of the Spirit follows—power from on high; the same Spirit that was poured upon Christ in his humanity, and that he promised to give to his disciples. Christ, ascended on high, becomes the sovereign dispenser of this, the manifest energy of the very God. He had told his disciples that that Spirit was waiting to impart Himself to them, as if the wealth of God's personal power had been pent up and restrained, till it could be withheld no longer, and when the work of Christ is completed it must come forth into discovered action through those who were joined to God through Christ. It was as if God himself, through the door which the incarnation and resurrection of Christ had opened into humanity, had entered upon the scene, like a torrent whose banks had been broken down, in the full manifestation of his being. Now, through the atonement made by Christ, there need be no limit to the wealth, the "riches," as Paul again and again calls it, of his manifestation. But it is the abundance of his grace wherewith he abounds towards us, that he might show the riches of his grace to the Gentiles. This power from on high does not remain a counsel in heaven, a plan, a scheme formed by God himself, but Christ sends it in the person of the Spirit to come down out of seclusion to insert itself into the hearts of men, to press its way in, to act and move and empower. God shows in his Spirit to them that believe "the exceeding greatness of his power according to the working of the strength of his might which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead . . . and gave him to be head over all things to the Church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all

in all." The Spirit now breathed upon men is represented as a mighty force (*δύναμις*) entering in, penetrating, transforming. The same Spirit had wrought his work in the world upon the Son whom he begat, whom he drove into the wilderness, whom he raised from the grave and set on high "above all rule and authority and power and dominion and every name that is named." Nor did he stay his pent-up energies there. On men, too, in Christ, that Spirit of Christ lays his hand and puts out his force. The love which caused him to pour out his strength upon the Son whom he begat, impels him to those included in oneness with the Son, and gives them the life and force and grace of the risen Lord of life.

Yes, blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with every spiritual blessing in Christ, even as he chose us, having foreordained us unto adoption as sons through Jesus Christ unto himself, to the praise of the glory of his grace which he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved, having made known unto us the mystery of his will, to the end that we should be unto the praise of his glory, having sealed us with the Holy Spirit unto the praise of his glory, having quickened us with Christ, and raised us with him, that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in Christ Jesus. This is the dispensation of the grace of God now to be preached to them that are far off as well as to them that are nigh, this open mystery of Christ, which in other generations was not made known unto the sons of men as it hath now been revealed in the Spirit, to wit, that the Gentiles are fellow-heirs and fellow-members of the body, and fellow-partakers of the promise in the gospel. And to us is this grace given, as to Paul, less than the least of all saints, to preach unto the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make all men see what is the dispensation of the mystery, to the intent that now might be made known through the Church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The mission of the Church, then, is the carrying out of the sending of Christ into the world—to seek and to save the lost—and he bids them to go into all the world. And if this brings immense responsibility upon them—as it does, for the work is given to men—they are to remember that the power is also bestowed, and that, Jesus Christ "being by the right hand of God exalted and having received of the Father the promise of the

Spirit," that Spirit with all His plentitude of power abides with men.

1. Is it not time for the Church to apprehend fully its function in the world? Christ came not to found a church; but he founded the Church as the means by which the work that he, by his incarnation, death, and resurrection, achieved once for all, should be made known and be made active in the world. By being in the Church we are under strict obligations, undertake responsibilities toward the ignorance, suffering, and sin of the world. We become members of Christ's body — the hands and feet on earth of Christ in heaven. To each of us the voice of Pentecost is uttering its eternal commission, applying the words which Christ appropriated to himself:

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon *thee*,
Because he anointed *thee* to preach good tidings to the poor;
He hath sent thee to proclaim release to the captives,
And recovering of sight to the blind,
To set at liberty them that are bruised,
To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord."

2. This missionary spirit is needful to the Church for its very existence; "for whosoever would save his life, shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, shall save it." The bestowment and the distribution of God's favor are connected, and the former ceases without the latter. Dr. Duff, in his memorable sermon on missions, has put it none too strongly when he says: "The church that ceases to be evangelistic (or missionary), ceases to be evangelical; and when it ceases to be evangelical, it ceases to be a true church of Christ, however primitive and apostolic it may be in its outward form and constitution."

As surely as Christianity is the religion for all men, so surely has the Christian Church a mission to all men. She cannot rest until she has made known "the Name" to all on earth. In her times of reviving an impulse for extension is always stirred, and all that is effected by her outside re-acts with animating result within the Christian circle. "The pulse of a distant success throbs back to the heart of the living Church, and the youngest child born into the family awakes the freshest joy." Christianity must grow by being both extensive and intensive. History shows

that a missionary church is a flourishing church, and that those Christian bodies that have seen this primal obligation most distinctly, and have given themselves most zealously to its fulfillment, are precisely those which increase most rapidly, and whose future is brightest with spiritual promise.

3. What right have we to change the terms of the commission—to turn to our own use what is intrusted to us by the Master to be carried into all the world? This is to repeat the mistake of the Church in the old dispensation, who hoarded for themselves what was designed for mankind, and thought more of themselves as the depositaries of the truth than of the world for whom the truth was given, and had to have their exclusiveness and egoism shattered again and again by dispersion, that they might be planted out among the nations as witnesses, in spite of themselves, to the world, and finally lost their place in carrying out the great plan for the nations. What right has Protestant America to overlook, suspend, or indefinitely postpone the work of foreign missions, or to say that we must first thoroughly Christianize our own land, and then fulfill the command? The two must go together. “There is that scattereth and yet increaseth.” Indeed, the power is given to us only as it is used—the righteousness and the grace of God are revealed from faith to faith. Is not our present comparative failure at home due to our inefficiency in going into all the world? Should we be on the defensive at this late day, and like a besieged city, if we had thrown ourselves in perfect faith against “the principalities and powers and world-rulers of this darkness?” What chance would there have been for the forms of doubt and skepticism of the present if we had verified the truth in all its saving power everywhere? The farther it goes out, the fuller is the proof of its divine power, the grander the testimony to its world-wide mission. Shall we depend upon persecution, as did the disciples at first, when “they that were scattered abroad went about preaching the Word?” Shall we wait for the corrupting agencies now at work to scatter us? Shall the kingdom be taken from us and given to another?

4. Christ has provided abundant means and motives for the propagation of his gospel. He gave not only an impulse, a sentiment, a school of thought to the world, but he organized his Church, a visible and stable institution, with definite doctrine, worship and government. He made this organized society capa-

ble of acting on those without, even to greatest distances, by its example, by its acts of prayer and praise, by its personal testimony — setting it a city on a hill not to be hid. He added to this impulsion of possibility and position the positive obligation to reach into the regions beyond; and for the fulfillment of this obligation has given a transmissible message that can be spoken and sent everywhere, that its line may go into all the earth and its words to the end of the world.

The means so amply provided he has reënforced by all the purest and strongest motives to use them. The greatness and urgency of salvation as needed by every creature appeals to man's sympathy and benevolence; the memory of personal deliverance, to gratitude; the command of our Lord makes the missionary spirit a duty, imitation of his pattern a privilege, and oneness with him through the Spirit a necessity. So, too, the difficulties in the way and the greatness of the task rouse all heroism and love of achievement; the thought of the glory of God, dishonored and defied, compacts all that is most zealous in piety; trust in the promises and predictions that foretell success fire with the conviction, "God is with us," while reliance upon the Holy Spirit sets at work all the energies of eternal life.

People swarm upon us on every side — wild and degraded and ignorant people, as well as educated and polite and speculative people; but they are all needy and hungry, and to every doubting question, "Whence shall we buy bread for so many?" and to every hesitating entreaty, "Send them away to buy for themselves," the assuring answer always comes back, "Give ye them to eat;" "Freely ye have received, freely give."

5. Enough for us that the Lord sends us to preach the gospel to the whole world. The one broad basis is loyalty to him. There is weariness on the part of some with the ideas, the methods, and the appeals of missions. Everything that is large and generous in this age of intellect is subjected to keenest criticism, and we cannot expect this work to escape. We are told that missions are too expensive; that they are a failure; that they are useless to the heathen, who either contemptuously reject them, or, if they receive them, their natural development is perverted into ungainly forms. Give to these peoples civilization, commerce, intercourse with other nations, government — develop these first, and the Christian preacher can follow in their train. We might ask how soon the

commerce in alcoholic drink that goes from New England and from Old England, the most advanced of commercial peoples, or the intercourse with other nations that marks its tracks with the bleaching bones of tribes dragged toward the coast of slave-traders, will prepare the way for the Christian preacher. We thank the critics. Part of their criticism was deserved; all was needed. Our self-satisfied, self-indulgent Christianity needed it. Our one church for the rich, another for the poor—one church for the whites, another for the blacks, needed it; our Christian England and America, with the right hand laden with death-dealing drinks and drugs for far-off peoples, while the lean and laggard left carries feebly the life-giving gospel, needed to be told that “he that soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly,” and that an enemy is doing his work.

And the whole Church needed to be summoned afresh, and to have her heroism and faith appealed to and aroused. We thank the critics. We needed to be reminded that as the Father sent Christ into the world, even so he sends us into the world, to call not righteous but sinners to repentance; to dare something for the gospel; to believe that it has power to arrest the careless, raise the fallen, to save to the uttermost—and already the fire of heroism kindles in men and women, and movement all along the line is called.

Preach Christ, and his cross and resurrection, is our answer, and now, as of old, in the track of the “beautiful feet” all goodly seeds will spring; in that preaching is the mighty “working whereby he is able even to subject all things unto himself.” Preach Christ, who reveals the true worth and dignity of man, the sacredness of obligations and rights, the brotherhood of men as the children of God and redeemed through Christ the common Saviour, and all those great ideas which have wakened man to himself, to society, and to God, and have guided and inspired the true political and social progress of modern times. Commerce has tried its hand at saving, strong rulers have tried, education has tried, civilization has tried, all experiments have been tried—for God rules men in freedom, and progress is by a series of costly experiments; but it is power from on high which has wrought salvation and development for man in all ages of Christian history. Christ crucified is the wisdom of God and the power of God. The risen and the living Christ—in him are all our springs. Great is the mission of commerce, of civilization, of

education, of science, and we hail them all; but the missionary of the cross has the first and the greater mission, to bear abroad the Word that quickens, redeems, and saves. And we fall back in perfect faith on the broad commission of the Master, and leave the results to him. He can find a place for these peoples, and he can care for them. We preach to men because Christ died for men, and wherever a man lives, we believe that there is an immortal being for whom he yearns; and if he has made the knowledge of his gospel depend upon the ministry of man to man, be it ours to justify his ways. He claims the world; be it ours to give the world to him.

“Christ for the world we sing:
The world to Christ we bring,
With loving zeal.”

The progress may seem slow. The light in touching so many points at once may be fitful, like the early sunbeams that tinge the summits apparently to fade away. But the promise of the morning is in its first glimmer, and it will not recede till the full day has come, and faith, soaring above the present, sees the glorious vision in the golden light of the future:

“Men of every tribe and tongue and people and nation made to be unto our God a kingdom and priests, and they reign upon the earth.”